

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, D.C. 20515**

March 19, 2002

The Honorable Richard A. Gephardt  
Democratic Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H204 Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Leader:

We are writing because critical budget decisions are now facing the House of Representatives.

President Bush, more than anyone else, influences the thousands of individual choices that must be made in the federal budget, and he has made his priorities absolutely clear. The President wants to continue the implementation of last year's tax cuts at a cost of \$1.2 trillion, extend them additional years at a cost of \$350 billion, adopt additional tax cuts that are estimated to cost \$270 billion, and increase defense spending by \$625 billion over ten years.

Regardless of our individual thoughts on these priorities, we all agree on their implications. Under the President's priorities, there simply won't be enough money to pay for a meaningful prescription drug plan, improve conditions in nursing homes, fund essential educational programs, and deal with America's infrastructure needs. Moreover, the combination of tax cuts and defense spending increases will mean that the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds will be invaded to fund other government programs.

As Democrats, we can challenge the President's priorities and propose a significantly different budget. But given the President's insistence on his program, there is little likelihood we would influence the outcome. Confrontation would result in partisan debates and battles, but little else.

A second alternative is to accept the President's priorities and work within those budgetary constraints, which would mean neglecting urgent national priorities. It would also mean breaking our promise to America's senior citizens and working families that we will protect and preserve Social Security. This option is clearly unacceptable.

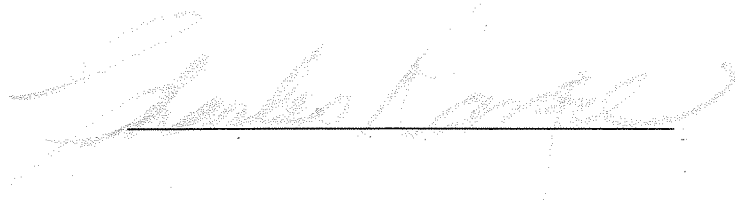
There is a third course, however, which we urge you to pursue. Instead of proposing our own budget, we ask that you let the President know of our sincere desire to work with him to balance the budget and address the many needs facing our country. A bipartisan, collaborative process is the best way to enact a fair, responsible, and responsive budget. As examples, we should look to the precedents of 1988 and 1989, in which a Democratic Congress worked with Republican Presidents to formulate a bipartisan budget plan of action.

Twenty years ago our country faced a similar situation. In 1981, President Reagan convinced Congress to enact sweeping tax cuts and large increases in defense spending. This combination, along with the funding of other government programs, resulted in an increase in the national debt of \$3 trillion from 1982-1998. It took courageous actions by President Bush in 1990 and President Clinton in 1993 to reverse the impacts of those earlier decisions and end the era of deficit budgets.

We have no interest in repeating the mistakes of the early 1980's, and we ask that you do everything possible to avoid a result that both neglects essential national needs and saddles our country with debilitating deficits.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Donna A. Wapner

George W. Bush

Alfred R. Gaffney

Jim McCall

Elijah E. Cummings

Ben Cardin

Frank Pallone Jr.

Bob Elder

Clair Benn

Red Person

Chaka Tattal

Pete Stark

Hanna McChrist

Diana Delitto

Ann E. Bond

Jim Davis

Frank Mascara

Joe Lef

Bill Pasrell Jr.

Corine Brown

Michael E. Capuano

Jim Lusher

Jim. D. Jefferson

Sander Luni

Rosa L. Jil Luni

Louise M. Slaughter

Phil Loney

Jim Oberstar

Tom Oby

Al Green

John Lewis

Marion Berry

Karen McCarthy

Max Fink

Paul Hender

Carol B. Malone

Lois Capps

John F. Sullivan

Jim Moran

Bart Sypak

Tom Allen

Jimmy Badden

Lynn Walsey

Earl Burman

Al (Carter)

Max Miller

Darlene Hooley

Thy A. Dyre

Tom Barnett

Cynthia McKinney

Jim Langerin

Rob A Brady

Joe J. L. Salce

Daniel E. Bauman

Al Smith

Rush Holt

Herold Nadler

Flower

Erin L. Engel

Albert R. Lynn

Alan B. Mellon

Robert E. R.

John H. R.

Walter Mehan

Carolyn C. Kephart

Doug P. Hall

Heidi L. Solis

Sam Lan

Charles C. Seng

Paul Buchman

John Seng

Paul Lee

Manuel Sanchez

William J. Cooper

Vince Varnes

Jerry Hughes

Steve Bernal

Bob Allen

Bill Pasarell

Phil Go

Mike Hanks

Art Sanger

John Bran

W. W. W.

Tim Holden

Mike B.

Cathy McCally

Pete Allen

Lane Evans

Betty McCallum

Patsy T. Munk

Alce D. Hastings

Alce E. Kildee

James F. Clegg

Howard L. Burman

Janet Millender Lamer

Marion E. Watson

Tina Rozumal

Phyllis Johnson Lee

Bobby Clegg

Benjamin Thompson

Ron Kindel

Joe Hoefel



Betty Scott

John Longenecker

Amelia Boring

Joe Brea

Kim McDowning

C. J. Cant

C. B. Felt

Lynne L. Davis

Michelle

Tom Sawyer

Barbara Lee

B. F. B.

Edward J. Marking

Stephen J. Marking

John W. Oliver

Tom Oliver

Eddie Bernice Johnson

Ed Pastor

Gregory White

Walter O. Lijinski

Tom Lantos

Mrs. M. Clayton

Wendell Ford

John R. Rosten

Samuel R. Ackerman

Joe E. Senneker

Robert H. G. G. G.

Danney K. Davis

Carl Peterson

Alfonso

John H. H.

Mary Kaptur

Grace I. Napolitano

Shirley Brown

W. H. H.

Lucas & Lee

Major R. Brown

W. H. H.

Jon Schumaker

Bob Filner

Shirley H. H.

Carrie P. Mark

Peta J. Visclosky

Peta Deutsch

Walter Wolf Lucille Raynal-Allard

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Julia Cross

John A. Cross

Bell Delahunt

Neil Abernethy

